

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 10474 111240Z
ACTION EA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10474

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, TH, US
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT'S VISIT: POSSIBLE SECURITY ASSISTANCE
INITIATIVES

REF: (A) STATE 76094; (B) BANGKOK 9561

1. WE BELIEVE THAI, PARTICULARLY RTAF, REMAIN INTERESTED IN ACQUIRING AN AIRBORNE ANTI-ARMOR CAPABILITY. HOWEVER, THIS INTEREST HAS REMAINED ILL-DEFINED AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN SUBJECT TO HEAVY INFLUENCE BY THE REALITIES OF HIGH COST INVOLVED. (ONE OF THE REASONS WE SUGGESTED PROVIDING P&B ON THE A-10 WAS OUR ANTICIPATION THAT THE COST WOULD DAMPEN RTAF INTEREST.) WE HAVE HEARD MUCH LESS ABOUT AN AIRBORNE ANTI-ARMOR CAPABILITY SINCE ESTABLISHING NEW PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING RTG REQUESTS ON MAJOR DEFENSE ITEMS WHICH REQUIRE THAT SUCH REQUESTS BE CHanneled THROUGH SUPREME COMMAND. ALSO, ONE OF THE MAIN PROPONENTS OF THE A-10, WHO ASPIRED TO THE CINC, RTAF, LOST OUT, AND THE NEW CINC HAS NEVER BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IT.

2. IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE AND RATIONALE PROVIDED REF B, WE AGREE WITH DEPT THAT VICE PRESIDENT SHOULD NOT RAISE AIRBORNE ANTI-ARMOR ISSUE, ESPECIALLY THE A-10.
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WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT PRIME MINISTER WILL NOT RAISE AIRBORNE ANTI-ARMOR QUESTION, BUT MINISTER OF DEFENSE GEN. LEK NAEOMALI IS KNOWN TO BE UNENTHUSIASTIC, FEELING THAT DEFENDING AGAINST AN ARMOR THREAT IS AN ARMY FUNCTION AND THAT AIRBORNE SYSTEMS ARE TOO EXPENSIVE. ALSO, WE WILL IN DISCUSSIONS WITH RTG SENIOR OFFICIALS DISCOURAGE THEM FROM RAISING QUESTION OF A-10S IF SUBJECT

ARISES. IF, IN SPITE OF OUR EXPECTATIONS, THE SUBJECT SHOULD BE RAISED BY KRIANGSAK, WE SUGGEST THE VICE PRESIDENT POLITELY DISCOURAGE FURTHER INTEREST, REFERRING TO BASIC TENETS OF PRESIDENT'S ARMS TRANSFER CONTROL POLICY AND EXPENSE OF SYSTEM. IT WOULD, OF COURSE, BE HELPFUL IF VICE PRESIDENT COULD INDICATE THAT THAILAND IS NOT THE ONLY COUNTRY TO WHICH THE USG COULD NOT BE RESPONSIVE RE THE A-10.

3. WE WILL REPORT ANYTHING WE LEARN ABOUT MR. CHIPMAN'S VISIT. WE ARE SOMEWHAT PUZZLED, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP. IT WAS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT, UNDER THE ARMS TRANSFER REGULATIONS, COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVES WERE PROHIBITED FROM PROMOTING THE SALE OF MAJOR DEFENSE ITEMS WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE USG.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE 106 MM RECOILESS RIFLES, WE AGREE THAT SUBJECT SHOULD BE HANDLED AS SUGGESTED PARA 2, REF A.

WHITEHOUSE

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